

## **STATE STRATEGIES AND USE OF TITLE I FUNDS FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES**

### **(1) Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities to Address Needs Identified in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals and Priorities.**

This is a description of the strategies intended to improve the number of employment outcomes, the percent of individuals achieving an employment outcome; the number of individuals achieving an employment outcome at or above minimum wage; the service rate to individuals with the most significant disabilities; the service rate for minority individuals; and the employment outcome rate for minority individuals.

Based on the results of the needs assessment, these strategies are intended to improve the performance of the DSU with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to section 106 of the Act.

The strategies identified in the DSU's annual goals and priorities in attachment 4.12 (c) (1) will address the issues related to the results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment to be completed next year. Progress in achieving goals is described in Attachment 4.12(e).

#### **Assistive Technology:**

One of the major needs in the area of assistive technology is to disseminate information to VR consumers and DSU staff about techniques, devices and services that have been effective in helping consumers achieve employment outcomes. The DSU awarded a services to groups grant to the University of Wisconsin-Stout to conduct assistive technology training session around the state for consumers and staff. The grant made stipends available for consumer participation at these sessions.

With excellent collaboration from Wisconsin's independent living centers, this program was highly regarded by consumers and counselors alike. The DSU continues to work with these partners to assure more effective use of existing assistive technology resources and to identify areas that are underserved.

#### **Community Rehabilitation Programs:**

The DSU actively works with community rehabilitation programs to identify new services, new patterns of services, and methods of payment. Based on feedback from VR counselors and consumers, the DSU has identified a need for major improvement in the provision of effective job development services. The DSU has instituted an evaluation of vendors of services (including community rehabilitation programs) in order to improve services to consumers.

The DSU has contracted with Allen Anderson Associates to provide training and technical assistance for a major overhaul of job placement services. Three pilot projects have begun in the Eau Claire, La Crosse and Madison Workforce Development Areas to provide training to DSU staff and vendors and implement new techniques that more effectively engage employers in the process of recruitment, hiring, and retention of individuals with disabilities.

### **Workforce Investment Act Partners:**

To assure that individuals with disabilities have access to the full range of services provided by the other Workforce Investment Act partners, DVR has identified this as a major goal. DVR has co-located into fifty-five job centers statewide. As we continue to move into job centers, we are providing training to other partners in serving individuals with disabilities and developing a greater awareness of the access and programmatic needs. The state's order of selection has meant that other job center partners have increased their provision of services to persons with disabilities.

The DSU actively participates with Designated State Agency sister Division of Workforce Solutions in implementing the states Workforce Investment Grant. Wisconsin is a leader in developing accessibility assessments and plans to resolve accessibility issues using a variety of funding mechanisms, providing training and information and referral services to consumers in Job Centers. As part of the Designated State Agency's efforts, the DSU contributed Services to Groups grant funding for job center accessibility surveys.

The DSU has entered into a memorandum of understanding with each of the 11 Local Workforce Investment Boards in Wisconsin. The MOU addresses operation of the One-Stop service delivery system including description of services and methods for referrals. The DSU of Vocational Rehabilitation will be pursuing the development of cooperative agreements under 34 CFR Part 361.23(b) with One-Stop partners with a focus on common intake and referral, and to facilitate job placement with employers.

### **Technology to Address Interpreter Service Needs for Deaf Consumers**

The DSU has long been interested in developing more affordable and available interpreter services. The logistics of getting an interpreter to each location needed in a timely fashion are daunting. Projects funded cooperatively with the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee and Northcentral Technical College are developing video remote interpreting and remote captioning services for VR consumers. These services are expanding to job centers around the state and will also help both of Wisconsin's post secondary systems meet their accessibility requirements.

## **Benefits Analysis and Component Employment Services:**

The DSU role in the Pathways to Independence project concluded 9/30/03. The DSU has implemented strategies to build on the positive elements of the project and focus services more accurately and flexibly for each consumer. The “one size fits all” approach was not cost-effective given the range of needs presented by VR consumers. The one element that was widely accepted was benefits analysis services and the DSU has added this service element to its basic statewide fee for service schedule. This will encourage more providers to get on board and expand the availability of this service. Other elements of the Pathways service delivery model that were effective will also be available as needed. These include paid Work Experiences, Job Shadowing, Mentoring, Informational Interviewing, Business Advisory Groups and other service components. Where these have been shown to be effective in meeting individual VR consumer needs, the DSU will purchase these on a fee for service basis.

## **Local Innovation and Expansion Projects**

Based on assessment of local needs, the DSU has funded local innovation and expansion projects in five areas of the state:

- In the Eau Claire area, DVR funded a new job placement provider who specialized in serving persons with epilepsy. Project activities included epilepsy awareness training sessions for employers as well as community rehabilitation providers and DVR staff. The program now provides job development services per DVR’s standard fee for service agreement.
- In the Rhinelander area, the local DVR manager worked with a community rehabilitation agency to expand transportation services for DVR consumers. DVR continues to work with community agencies in the area to seek various grant funds to develop an expanded and flexible transportation network.
- In the Fox Valley area, the local DVR supervisor worked with a community rehabilitation program to develop a comprehensive package of office and computer skills training that includes, work experiences, job seeking and keeping skills and job placement services. This program has successfully transitioned to a fee for service basis.
- In Milwaukee, DVR funded a project with a community agency to develop a comprehensive sequence of services to meet the needs of deaf DVR consumers. Services included vocational assessment, work experiences, work adjustment training, communication skills and job placement. This project has also transitioned successful to fee for service.
- A Wausau area Hmong project was established, but only a few VR consumers were actually served. The Wausau Area Hmong Association was able to host a statewide conference to increase awareness of VR and other resources in this population. The local supervisor continues to work with this organization and Northcentral Technical College to seek additional funds for this effort.

## **Ongoing Innovation and Expansion Efforts**

The DSU is planning ongoing innovation and expansion projects to address the following needs:

- Outreach efforts to serve targeted groups
- Increased availability and use of rehabilitation technology services.
- More effective provision of supported employment services to reduce the reliance on state and county funding of long term support.
- More effective use of job development services.
- Transition services from high school to work for youth.

### **(2) Strategies for Outreach Activities to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities who are unserved and underserved.**

Patterns of inequitable service delivery of individuals with disabilities unserved and underserved have been documented throughout the vocational rehabilitation process nationwide. The DSU continues to maintain its commitment to serving the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities including individuals from unserved and underserved groups.

#### **GOAL**

The DSU continues its efforts to expand services to unserved and underserved groups with the most significant disabilities.

#### **STRATEGIES**

1. The DSU maintains a workgroup to continue to address multicultural service and training issues. The DSU has identified its vital documents and these are available in Spanish and Hmong, as well as alternate formats, including large print, audio tape and Braille. The DSU continues to monitor its publications and other information to ensure that the list of vital documents remains current and that information that is needed to access services is available in other languages and in alternate formats.

The DSU acknowledges the requirements of the General Education Provision (GEPA) Section 47 and the need to have equitable access and participation in the DSU program service delivery system for individuals with special needs. In addition, the DSA has a statewide work group with representation from the DSU to provide services to Limited English Speaking individuals who are often unserved or underserved due to language barriers.

2. According to the state's SFY 03' - 05' biennium budget, program revenue is provided to the DSU from the Native American Gaming Initiative (NAGI) gaming fund, for programs and services for Native Americans with disabilities at or near reservations. The DSU uses these funds to match federal funds, and allocates funds to increase collaboration efforts with tribal programs, for a variety of benefits to the Native American population in Wisconsin.

These benefits include, but are not limited to, expanding outreach, increasing VR services to Native Americans, targeted services to Native Americans not living on or near reservations, and rehabilitation technology for the Great Lakes Inter Tribal Council (GLITC), Oneida Tribe, and Lac Courte Oreilles.

Additionally, the GLITC, Lac Courte Oreilles, the Oneida Tribe, and DSU VR, worked cooperatively to receive three Section 121 grants. DVR staff, both direct service and administrative, provided technical consultation along with the American Indian Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (AIRRTC) from Northern Arizona University to GLITC, Oneida Nation, and LacCourte Oreilles. The GLITC was awarded a second five-year Section 121 grant.

The DSU has two Native American Outreach Workers who are co-located in the local Milwaukee office. These outreach workers are on the payroll of the GLITC since CY 2000. The DSU provides administrative support and trains and mentors the workers to increase the number of referrals, facilitate Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) with cultural sensitivity to Native American services and values and increase employment outcomes of Native American Indians. Census figures reveal that there are more Native American Indians living in the Metro Milwaukee area than on all the combined reservations in Wisconsin. Preliminary results have indicated that referrals have increased and IPE's are jointly developed with the input of the consumer, Native American workers and DSU staff.

As a result of the above co-location and collaborative activity, one Native American outreach worker will enroll in the graduate vocational rehabilitation program at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee campus in the fall 2004 academic year.

This unprecedented cooperation with Wisconsin's American Indians, and the diligence and commitment by staff in our Green Bay, Rhinelander, Spooner and Central offices, resulted in three Section 121 grants being awarded that will provide vocational rehabilitation services on or near the reservations.

These three grants have improved employment opportunities for persons with disabilities within Native American communities and provided trained, skilled, qualified workers to Wisconsin employers.

The DSU has undertaken initiatives to serve the state's rapidly increasing Latino and Hispanic population's. In Milwaukee, the DSU has hired a Latino bi-lingual counselor who is located at a job center run by United Migrant Opportunity Services, a Latino human service organization. The Madison office has hired a bi-lingual counselor and recently added a bi-lingual job placement vendor to its fee for service provider list. In Kenosha, a bi-lingual counselor was hired in March 2004, thereby increasing service delivery in three of the largest Latino/Hispanic communities in Wisconsin.

The DSU has contracted with Easter Seals Wisconsin to provide vocational rehabilitation farmers with disabilities who have traditionally been underserved by the agency. Activities carried out under this contract include outreach (early intervention) and DSU staff training. Direct services to farmers with disabilities include farm site assessments, rehabilitation technology assessments, agribusiness self-employment plans and financial analysis of farm operations.

The DSU has agreed to fund training and related costs for several DVR consumers to attend the annual Youth Leadership Summer Program at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater campus. This training opportunity provides youth with disabilities to interact with peers in leadership position and to develop mentor relationships for successful career attainment and advancement.

The DSU has also assigned a liaison counselor to each of the secondary high schools in the state. DSU staff attend IEPs and incorporate transition services in IPEs with the goal of having an approved IPE before the individual graduates from high school to achieve a seamless transition upon post- secondary matriculation.

The DSUs focus is to improve qualitative outcomes with performance based goals after the innovation and expansion projects end usually after a three-year funding cycle. The DSU has several I & E grants to outcome based performance. In 2003, the DSU converted I & E grants funded for blind and visually impaired individuals at North Central Technical College and the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Disability and Elderly Services, Bureau for the Blind.

The 2003 Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council annual report documents the involvement of the council in the development of lasting achievements to improve services to individuals with disabilities. DSU staff provide presentations at council meetings on policy changes and jointly hold public hearing meetings on state plan updates. Council members serve on the DVR Policy Academy that is charged with reviewing current policy and recommending changes when appropriate.

**(3) Strategies to Overcome Identified Barriers Relating to Equitable access to and Participation of Individuals with Disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.**

The DSU recognizes that individuals with a disability often face barriers and disincentives in terms of accessing employment services. The DSU works collaboratively with others to overcome some of these barriers. Some of these activities are described elsewhere in this plan. Reference is made to Attachment 4.12(c)(1); goals 5 and 6 (pages 3-4) which describe efforts to improve access to services in job centers. Attachment 4.12(c)(3) describes activities related to supported employment services and Attachment 4.12(e), page 1, which describes the DSU's collaborative efforts.

One issue that prevents consumers from accessing supported employment services is the limited long-term support dollars available from the counties. VR, in concert with other partners, is exploring more creative methods for providing supported employment. That might occur with alternative funding or no funding. Examples include: identifying employers in industries who might subsidize the costs of training, volunteer organizations, and creative innovative types of contracts or use of PASS plans. The DSU has projects funded in Buffalo and Langlade counties designed to develop and document best practices in supported employment. Results from these projects will be part of statewide training for providers and VR staff over the next several years.

#### **Comments Submitted Regarding Attachment 4.12(d):**

Gathered at public hearing, Kohler:

Steven West, the Chair of the State Independent Living Council commented that he would like to see specific language reflecting the relationship between DVR and the State Plan for Independent Living employment plan. There should be formal recognition of the relationship between SILC and DVR in the state Plan. Charlene Dwyer suggested that perhaps a statement of the relationship between DVR and the SILC State Plan employment objectives could be added in the innovation & research section. She suggested a clarification in the state plan that formalizes the relationship and what DVR and SILC are already doing.

#### **DVR Response to SILC Comments:**

DVR agrees with both recommendations and the appropriate language will be added to Attachment 4.12(d) of the state plan.